

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 4 and 6-12 will have been amended while claims 5 and 13 will have been canceled. Additionally, claims 14-16 will have been submitted for consideration by the Examiner.

In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding rejections set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

Initially, Applicants wish to respectfully thank the Examiner for accepting the drawings filed in the present application on May 20, 2004. Additionally, Applicants respectfully thank the Examiner for considering each of the documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statements filed in the present application on August 20, 2004 and August 10, 2005 by the return of the signed and initialed copies of the PTO-1449 Forms attached thereto.

Additionally, Applicants respectfully thank the Examiner for acknowledging their Claim for Foreign Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 and for confirming receipt of the certified copy of the foreign priority document.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by SUZUKI (JP011-27842). Claims 2 and 3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over SUZUKI in view of LYNCH (U.S. Patent No. 5,005,365). Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over SHAROOD et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,453,687). Claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over SUZUKI in view of KONDO et al. (JP62-288443).

The Examiner indicated claims 5-11 and 13 as being objected to for depending upon a rejected base claim. However, the Examiner indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten into independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By the present Response and without in any manner acquiescing in any of the rejections set forth by the Examiner, Applicants have, merely in order to expedite the allowance of the subject matter of the present application, rewritten objected-to claims 5 and 13 into independent form including the recitations of their respective base claims. Moreover, in amending the claims to rewrite claims 5 and 13 into independent form, Applicants have also improved the language of the claims to enhance clarity without narrowing the scope thereof. Thus, these amendments should not give rise to any prosecution history estoppel.

By the present Response, Applicants have further submitted several additional dependent claims for consideration by the Examiner. These claims are submitted to be patentable at least based on their depending from an indicated to be allowable independent claim.

Accordingly, at least in accordance with the Examiner's indication, each of the claims now pending in the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. Thus, an action to such effect is respectfully requested, in due course.

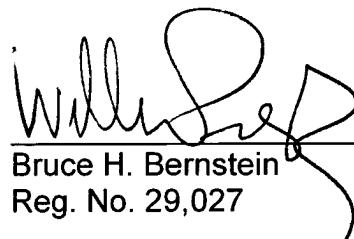
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have rewritten two objected-to claims into independent form. Applicants have additionally amended the language of the claims to enhance clarity. Applicants have accordingly placed the present application in clear condition for allowance at least in accordance with the Examiner's indication. An action to such effect is respectfully requested.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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